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BOLD FRONTIER PREACHER



Portraiture of

Rev William Cravens.



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The Bold Frontier Preacher.

A PORTRAITURE

OF

REV. WILLIAM CRAVENS,

OF VIRGINIA.

BY REV. J. B. WAKELEY.

"We use great boldness of speech."

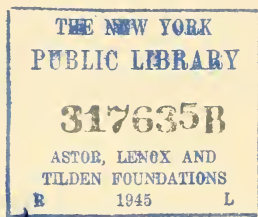
"Valiant for the Truth."

L. C.

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Dedication.

TO THE ADMIRERS OF THE PIONEERS OF METHODISM,

OF THEIR HEROIC DEEDS,

AND BOLD PREACHING AGAINST SIN:

TO THE LOVERS OF FREEDOM,

AND HATERS OF SLAVERY AND INTEMPERANCE,

IS THIS LITTLE VOLUME

MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

MANY years ago, I heard of the fame of Virginia's distinguished hero, REV. WILLIAM CRAVENS. Tales of his courage, of his valor, of his chivalric acts, of his deeds of daring worthy of the days of martyrs, and it awoke within me an ardent desire to know more concerning him. For more than twelve years I have been trying to learn his history, and rescue from oblivion facts that would soon be lost forever. The history of many of the noble pioneers of Methodism is unwritten, except in the records of eternity. Many of them died

“Unwept, unhonored, and unsung;”

and were buried, and no monument or tomb-

stone to tell where their dust is sleeping. There is an unwritten history, which, if it could be recovered, would be invaluable to the Church. But it is now too late.

In regard to Mr. Cravens. In 1856 I received from his son-in-law, Rev. Mr. Shanks, of Indiana, many facts concerning him. Since then, Mr. Shanks has gone on to meet the Judge. From a number of aged preachers, who were personally acquainted with Mr. Cravens, and heard him preach, have I obtained facts of priceless value. From the late Thomas E. Bond, M. D., I learned much of his history and character. The Doctor was a traveling encyclopedia—history embodied. He delighted to relate anecdotes of olden times, and none could do it with a better zest. Cravens he knew and admired, and I have listened to him with great pleasure as he drew his portrait, and related characteristic anecdotes concerning him. As I stood by his coffin, and read those noble

words of our own sweet poet, Charles Wesley,

“Servant of God, well done!

Thy glorious warfare ’s past ;

The battle ’s fought, the race is won,

And thou art crowned at last,”

I looked at the old veteran and thought, how much of history has died with you! And so it is with others. How few of the men of the Revolution remain to tell of the times that tried men’s souls! How few of the men who were acquainted with Methodism in its heroic age, remain to tell the story! This shows the importance of early gathering up historical facts and incidents, and recording them ; for the fathers will not be with us long to repeat the story. “The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?”

In order to obtain light in regard to Mr. Cravens, I have conversed with those who were personally acquainted with him, and corresponded with others. I am indebted to

Bishops Morris and Ames, Dr. J. M'Clin-
tock, Revs. John A. Gere, Charles Ried,
the late James Sewell, Alfred Brunson, John
F. Wright, for facts that have enriched this
little volume. From Rev. John Dungey, who
lived for years in the Shenandoah Valley,
where Cravens resided, who was personally
acquainted with him, heard him preach often,
met him in class, was familiar with his mar-
velous deeds, I received a description of his
personal appearance, and some characteristic
anecdotes and thrilling incidents that illus-
trate the man and the times in which he
lived. I had just written them from his lips,
and the ink was hardly dry before he expired.
But, after all, there is an unwritten history
of the wonderful man who has a fame in Vir-
ginia as a hero, and in the great West will
long be remembered as a pioneer.

The fragmentary leaves we have been able
to gather only make us desire a more com-
plete history of the wonderful man. We have

only the outlines, we would have a full and perfect portrait ; we have only the preface, we wish for the volume.

This little work has cost me more time and labor than I shall ever receive credit for ; but if it has rescued one of the names of the noble heroes of Methodism from oblivion, that otherwise would have perished and been forgotten, and if it inspires any with a hatred of two of the mightiest evils that have disgraced our country and cursed the world—namely, *Intemperance and Slavery*—I shall not regret my labor.

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SKETCH
OF
WILLIAM CRAVENS.

MORE than forty years have passed away since that unyielding champion of the Cross, WILLIAM CRAVENS, fell, sword in hand, covered with scars and loaded with honors, and went up to receive his crown.

WILLIAM CRAVENS was one of the most remarkable men of an age that developed many a striking character in the Methodist Episcopal ministry. To Virginia we are indebted for this Son of Thunder. He was born in Rockingham county, July 31, 1766, the same year

as American Methodism. Rockingham county was formerly a part of Augusta. In Rockingham county is a part of the Shenandoah Valley, and through the eastern portion flows the main Shenandoah River, which, on account of its surpassing beauty, was so named by the Indians, which signifies the daughter of the stars. The country was beautiful, and the soil rich and productive. Cravens spent his early days in this Valley, now immortalized from the thrilling scenes that transpired there during the late war. Here he was converted, and identified himself with the Church, and here he was married, in 1794, to Miss Jane Harrison, daughter of Col. Benjamin Harrison, by whom he had three children. The same year he united with the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was a tiller of the soil, and owned an

excellent farm twelve miles from Harrisonburg.

Mr. Cravens was licensed to preach in 1800, and was ordained a deacon by Bishop Asbury. Afterward ordained elder, when and by whom not known. Like Freeborn Garretson, when first converted, he had such a perfect abhorrence of slavery that he manumitted all his slaves. Before his conversion he had sold some slaves that were taken to Georgia. He made a journey there and re-purchased them, and then set them free. In this way he brought forth fruits meet for repentance.

Mr. Cravens exercised his talents in Virginia as a local preacher till he emigrated West, where he joined the traveling connection. Endowed with rare physical and mental qualities, the preaching of Cravens soon began to

make a great noise in Virginia, and he was sent for in every direction. Though always a local preacher during his residence in that State, he traveled extensively, attending quarterly and camp meetings, and his presence was always welcome. After a time he had a regular system of appointments, covering a large territory, and requiring him to be absent from home for weeks at a time. He was not connected with the Conference, or even employed by the presiding elder. Mr. Cravens found his own home and provided for his own wants, except so far as the hospitality of Virginia Methodists supplied all that he needed during his traveling excursions. Concerning Mr. Cravens's boldness and eccentricities there are marvelous stories still current in the region of his early exploits. Forty years ago you could

hardly enter any Virginia Methodist family in the north-eastern part of the State without hearing from the lips of the "elders" some story of Cravens's physical prowess, of his daring assaults upon Satan's kingdom, of his shrewd and ready wit, and exhaustless stories of anecdote and illustration. It is deeply to be regretted that the facts in his history, as is the case with so many of the pioneers of Methodism, are fast passing into oblivion, and many of them are lost forever.

In 1819 Mr. Cravens emigrated, with his family, from Virginia, the place of his birth, and where he had spent his boyhood, youth, and manhood, to what was called the "Far West." In 1821 he was admitted into the Missouri Conference, which then included Indiana, Illinois, part of Tennessee, as well as Missouri

and Arkansas. He was first appointed to Charleston circuit with Calvin Ruter, who was brother to Martin Ruter, D. D., a pioneer of Methodism in Texas, and who fell a martyr there. There was the Illinois district and the Indiana district. He was on the latter; and the noble Samuel Hamilton was his presiding elder. Such men were an honor to Western Methodism, and helped give it character. They aided in laying the foundation of Methodism in the West, now so grand and glorious. In 1822 Mr. Cravens traveled alone Indianapolis circuit, or rather he organized that circuit, and then traveled it and preached the Gospel. The country was then new, the inhabitants sparse, the fare poor, roads intolerable, streams with few bridges; and yet he went forth in pursuit of the sheep in the wilderness in danger of

perishing. The love of Christ constrained him.

What a mighty change since that day! States as large as empires have been born, imperial cities have sprung into existence, and conferences have multiplied exceedingly, so that "deep calleth unto deep:" "the wilderness and the solitary places have been made glad, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." In 1823 Mr. Cravens was on Eel River. In 1824 on Blue River circuit, and William Beauchamp was his presiding elder. He was one of our noblest, purest men, a ripe scholar; an orator of such rare powers he was styled "The Demosthenes of the West." He was a member of the General Conference held in Baltimore in May, 1824. There he was so popular he came within two votes of being elected

Bishop. He returned from Baltimore and entered hastily upon his work ; he attended three quarterly meetings, and his work was done. He was taken sick, and was removed to the house of William Cravens, where he lay for weeks, being nursed and treated with the utmost kindness. In order to be more convenient to medical aid he was removed to Peoli, where the great and good man expired in October, aged 52, leaving a pure and spotless name behind him, of more value than great riches.

This was Mr. Cravens's last year of effective service. His vigorous frame was giving way, the strong man was bowing himself.

By division of the Missouri Conference, in 1825, he fell into the Illinois Conference, and took a superannuated relation. His last illness was of few

days' duration, nor was he thought to be seriously ill till he was found insensible in bed. He died a few hours after at his own home, in Worthington county, Indiana, October 10, 1826. His wife survived him nine years, and then died in holy triumph, in April, 1835, aged 80. Mrs. Cravens was a "mother in Israel," one of the "excellent of the earth," full of love and good works, industrious, frugal, courageous—a fitting helpmeet for the bold frontier preacher.

It is worthy of note that the Minutes of the Annual Conference of which he was a member devote but six lines to Mr. Cravens, one of the most wonderful champions of truth who has lived since the days of John the Baptist—one whose history would swell a volume.

Mr. Cravens was distinguished for great strength. He was a Samson,

and never lost the lock of his strength. Mr. Cravens was remarkable for his great size, weighing almost as much as two ordinary men. He possessed a large share of common sense: he knew how and when to answer a fool according to his folly. Those who thought to find in him a fool soon discovered their mistake. Wit, irony, and sarcasm he used to confound error, silence infidels, and establish the truth.

Mr. Cravens had great powers of endurance. It would have crushed many men to have endured the hardships he passed through. He entered the fiery furnace, and he came out without having the smell of fire on his garments. He was not a flower of the sun, but cradled by the storm and rocked by the tempest. But none of these things moved him.

Another trait in his character was

great courage and holy boldness. He had the boldness of Luther, the fearlessness of Knox. He was made of such materials as martyrs are made of. He was a moral hero.

The anecdotes and illustrations that follow go to show two leading *hatreds* of Cravens—a *hatred* of slavery and a *hatred* of rum. His preaching was as fearless and unsparing on these points in Virginia as in Indiana or Illinois. Sometimes "lewd fellows of the baser sort" would combine to put him down; but when the crisis came, and the majestic form of Cravens, six feet high, and weighing 275 pounds, with every limb well proportioned and every muscle disciplined up to the fullest vital force, their courage would ooze out "at their fingers' ends," and they would retire, leaving the old hero alone in his glory,

and master of the field. In reading his brief history the reader will be satisfied that Billy Cravens was "valiant for the truth," as well as the character described by the immortal Bunyan in his inimitable work, "The Pilgrim's Progress."

Mr. Cravens could say, with Paul, "for God has not given us the spirit of *fear*, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." He also could sing with John Wesley, who was a hero as well as a poet:

"Shall I for fear of feeble man
The Spirit's course in me restrain?
Or undismay'd in deed and word,
Be a true witness of my Lord?

Awed by a mortal's frown shall I
Conceal the Word of God Most High?
How then before thee shall I dare
To stand, or how thine anger bear?

Shall I to soothe the unholy throng,
Softens thy truth, or smooth my tongue,
To gain earth's gilded toys—or flee
The cross endured, my Lord, by thee?

What, then, is he whose scorn I dread?
Whose wrath or hate makes me afraid?
A man! an heir of death! a slave
To sin! a bubble on the wave!

Yea, let men rage, since thou wilt spread
Thy shadowing wings around my head:
Since in all pain thy tender love
Will still my sure refreshment prove."

ANECDOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

I.

THE BULLY.

MR. CRAVENS, like Benjamin Abbott, was a great fighter before he was converted, and woe to the man who fell into his hands. Mr. Cravens was a man of unusual courage and strength. He also drank whisky very freely.

The Rev. John A. Gere, of the Baltimore Conference, was personally acquainted with him, having traveled the circuit on which Mr. Cravens resided. To him I am indebted for the following characteristic anecdote of Mr. Cravens.

Before his conversion, Mr. Cravens was at work one day on the roof of a house, when a stranger came up to him and said, "I understand you are the strongest man in three towns, and I have come to whip you, and I wish you to go down where we can have an opportunity to test our strength." Mr. Cravens mildly told him "he would give him an opportunity when he had finished his work." Having done so, he went down. He told the man "he thought they had better take a drink before they fought." There was a barrel of whisky at the door, and Mr. Cravens took the barrel by the chimes and lifted it up at arms' length, and drank out of the bung-hole, and as the whisky gurgled as Mr. Cravens was drinking, the man looked on with astonishment. Mr. Cravens having slaked his thirst, deliberately sat the barrel

down and said to the man who wanted to whip him, "*Please help yourself.*" Instead of complying with the invitation he turned pale and trembled, and turning on his heel he said to Mr. Cravens, "*I guess you'll do,*" and he made a hasty retreat.

II.

THE CHALLENGE.

MR. CRAVENS was so strong and courageous that his fame extended far and wide. One day, as he was busily engaged in working on his farm, a stranger from a distant State called on him, and inquired, "Is your name Cravens?"

"Yes, sir," was the answer.

Stranger. Mr. Cravens, I have come several hundred miles to fight you. I have heard you were the strongest man in all this part of the country, and I

have come either to whip you, or to be whipped by you, and I do not mean to return without testing our strength, and it may as well be done here as any where else.

Cravens. Stranger, you have come on a very poor errand, and you had better return home. I am a very good-natured man, and do not wish to fight.

Stranger. Mr. Cravens, I am not satisfied to return home. I have not come all this distance for nothing, and I insist upon your fighting me now. Defend yourself, [as he squared off for the occasion,] for one or the other of us must be whipped.

Cravens. Stranger, if you must fight, come on, I am ready.

The stranger struck at him several hard blows, which Mr. Cravens parried off with the utmost ease, and then

seizing the fellow he threw him nearly a rod over a stone fence. The astonished man rose from the ground and said to Mr. Cravens, "Now, if you will be so kind as to throw my horse over the fence, I will return home satisfied."

III.

CRAVENS AND HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW.

AFTER Mr. Cravens's marriage and settlement in life, he was awakened to his sinful state, and he became alarmed for his future welfare. He had a brother-in-law named Benjamin Lawrence, whom he called "Ben," while he went by the cognomen of "Billy Cravens." After Mr. Cravens became serious he said to his brother-in-law, "I tell you what it is, Ben, you and I are wicked; and if we don't change our mode of living, the devil

will have us both." "I know that," said Ben; "but what can we do? how can we help ourselves? The devil is bound to have us any how."

"Well, I'll tell you, Ben, I have been thinking of joining the Methodist Meeting, but there is one trouble in the way."

"What is that?" said Ben.

"Why, if I do join them," said Cravens, "they will ask me to pray, and I can't. But, Ben, I will tell you what I mean to do, I have an old prayer book, and I'll learn a prayer out of that, and you and I will go to the woods, and I'll say it over, and when I get it by heart I'll join the Methodists, and if they ask me to pray, I'll repeat what I have learned." The prayer was soon learned, and "Billy" joined the "Meeting."

The next prayer meeting the leader called upon Mr. Cravens to pray. Billy

commenced, and after uttering a few words the rest had all vanished from him. A painful silence ensued, when he turned his head toward his friend and said, "I have forgotten every word of it." He then sunk down humbled and mortified before God and the people. But the experiment was a great benefit to him. It led him to seek help from God and not depend on printed prayers. It led him to depend on the Spirit for assistance, and to pray by uttering the feelings of his heart in such language as he could command, and he soon found peace with God, and then he could pray with the spirit and the understanding also. He never wished a prayer book after that, or tried to commit a prayer to memory. The Spirit helped his infirmities. He was powerful in prayer. He took hold of high heaven and brought salvation down.

Mr. Cravens had most remarkable answers to his prayers. Like Jacob, he wrestled with the angel of the covenant, became a prince, had power with God, and prevailed.

IV.

CRAVENS AND HIS SINGLE EYE.

MR. CRAVENS lost an eye from a piece of stone that flew into it while he was working at his trade, that of a stonemason. Some of the greatest Christian heroes, who have performed noble deeds and immortalized themselves, had but one eye. Thomas Webb, one of the founders of American Methodism, the old hero of a hundred battles, had but one eye. Gideon Ousley, Ireland's greatest missionary, the great battle-ax against Popery, had but one eye. Christmas

Evans, the great Welsh orator, had but one eye.

Mr. Cravens's one eye often looked like a diamond, was singularly expressive, and often sinners would quail as he looked at them. Sinners would sometimes make sport of his one eye. The rowdies were carrying on at a camp meeting, and they ridiculed his one eye. Cravens heard them and said, "I'll tell you what it is, if I have only one eye, I can see as far into a mill-stone as one who pecks it." The manner in which it was said gave the rowdies to understand he was not afraid of them, and they let him alone. No one acquainted with his personal history can doubt that he had an eye single against whisky and slavery, and an eye single for the purity, honor, and glory of the Church.

V.

THE CAMP MEETING.

MR. CRAVENS delighted to worship in Nature's magnificent temple, in God's great cathedral. He believed with Bryant,

"The groves were God's first temples."

There he felt at home, and the strong man put forth all his strength. He not only had a lion heart, but a lion-like voice, and he made the forests tremble. At a camp meeting Mr. Cravens preached from Genesis xxiv, 49: "And now, if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me," etc. The reader will remember these are the words of the servant in pursuit of a wife for Isaac. Mr. Cravens alluded to the motives of one and another for coming to camp meeting, and then to his own.

1. He had not come there to seek a wife for himself, for he already had a good one.

2. He had not come there to feather his nest by preaching for a large salary.

3. He had come to obtain a bride for his Master, to honor God, to save souls.

After the sermon there was a troubler of Israel, who gathered quite a congregation around him, listening to his skeptical remarks. Delighted with his scorning, the jovial shout and the merry laugh were heard, emboldening the man to go on with his ridicule. Mr. Cravens was one of his auditors, listened to him for some time, till it was perfectly unbearable, and Mr. Cravens concluded to put an end to his scorning. He stepped forward and seized the base fellow by the neck and the seat of his pants, and held him up for some time in this uneasy

position, with the ease he would a baby, the man begging like a cripple, and promising never to do so again if he would let him go. Mr. Cravens held him as if in a vise till he thought he was sufficiently punished. Then he let him go, saying, "You came here to catch a fish, and you have caught a frog."

VI.

THE AUCTIONEER.

MR. CRAVENS attended an auction near his place, where they were disposing of the productions of a farm. As they were selling a quantity of corn the auctioneer said: "Mr. Cravens, give us a bid." The owner was a large slaveholder, and his slaves had worked the farm and gathered in its products. Mr. Cravens knew this, and he thus replied

to the auctioneer: "No, I have a hundred bushels of corn at home in my granary, and there is not a drop of blood among it all." It was the product of free labor.

VII.

THE OX.

MR. CRAVENS attended a camp meeting in Rockingham county, Va., and among others a child of his was converted, and the father's heart was filled with joy; and to show his gratitude he roasted an ox, and provided dinner for all who would eat. If he saw any who were serious, and wished to remain longer, he made ample provision for them, and in this way he did much good.

VIII.

THE INFIDEL.

AT the camp meeting just spoken of there was a self-conceited skeptic, who gathered the people in groups, and ridiculed and opposed the work of God. He was an intruder ; and, possessing much of the cunning of the old serpent, he was doing immense mischief. Mr. Cravens concluded he would put a stop to the work of this son of Belial, and he advertised him from the stand. Said he : "There is an infidel on this ground, an opposer of Christianity. I caution you against him, and I will tell you how you will know him. He has a long-tailed blue coat and white pants, and you will see him gathering the people together, and ridiculing the work of God." The caution had the desired effect, and they

got rid of a troublesome fellow ; for, when he heard the caution, there was what Shakspeare called “a strange absence of body.”

IX.

ENOCH GEORGE.

IN 1805, years before Enoch George was elected Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Baltimore Conference, of which he was a member, held its session at Harrisonburg, Virginia. The Methodist ministers were then the uncompromising enemies of slavery, and preached against it with peculiar boldness. On the Sabbath, Enoch George preached before the Conference, and in his sermon he thus touched on the peculiar institution: “I do not see how some people can come to meeting and

get so happy while Joseph is home in chains." William Cravens was present; and, delighted to hear slavery denounced and the pious slaveholders get a benefit, he cried out, at the top of his stentorian voice: "*Let them go home and take the chains off from Joseph, and set him free for the good he has done, and then come back to meeting, and we will praise God together.*" It went through that assembly of preachers and people like an electric shock.

X.

THE SLAVEHOLDER.

MR. CRAVENS having preached in a place in Virginia a sermon on the sin of slavery, as being contrary to the golden rule, contrary to God's Word, and in opposition to the Declaration of Inde-

pendence, was violently denounced by a man who had sold a slave and bought a pew in a church in the neighborhood. He collected around him several sinners of the baser sort ; excited great prejudice against Mr. Cravens. They went to him and demanded he should make a public apology for such preaching. To the surprise of many who heard him, he readily consented to do so, and the time was appointed. When the day arrived a great crowd came to hear his apology. He was punctual to the hour, read a hymn, which was sung, then he prayed ; after which he arose from his knees, looked over the audience, then took up the Bible and turned over its leaves very rapidly. "Well," said Mr. Cravens, "I am to preach an apologetic sermon to-day, but I can not find a suitable text." He paused and looking right in the face

of the leader of the opposition, leaning over the pulpit, he cried out: "I have it now, honeys: '*Sell a negro and buy a pew.*'" The man looked daggers, and began to wring and twist as Mr. Cravens proceeded with his sermon, which was as pointed as his text. The man endured it as long as he could, and then he started for the door. As he went down the aisle, with his gloves and pocket-handkerchief stuffed into the outside pocket of his coat, hitching up his shoulders and smarting under the withering rebuke of the old son of thunder, Mr. Cravens said: "Stop a little, honey, let me fill your other pocket before you go." But the man would not stop to get his other pocket filled, he having load enough to carry, and went away mortified and chagrined, with the text ringing in his ear: "*Sell a negro and buy a pew.*"

XI.

THE CLASS MEETING.

MR. CRAVENS in meeting class was very plain and pointed in his questions, and laconic in his answers. He made the application as he went along. Meeting class at a certain place in Virginia he spoke very encouragingly to those

“Who are traveling home to God,
In the way their fathers trod.”

Then he came to a distiller, whose employment he well knew, and in his own peculiar way tapped him on the shoulder, and said: “Brother, will you be so kind as to tell the class how many gallons you can make to the bushel?” The distiller made no answer, and Mr. Cravens passed on to the next, leaving conscience to do its work with the distiller. He then inquired of a slaveholder: “Brother, how

do you get along in the good way?" The brother arose, and made very stammering work of it. His throat seemed very dry and husky, and he had a bad cough. He said "he did not get along as well as he wished," and complained of his coldness and lukewarmness, and then he would cough. Mr. Cravens told him "it was only a little wool he had in his throat;" and said, "Cough away, brother; that's right, cough up the negroes."

XII.

THE PRAYER MEETING.

MR. CRAVENS attended a prayer meeting one evening, where he spent the night. The prayers were dull and dry, and the meeting spiritless. The minister called on two men to pray—the one

a slaveholder, the other a distiller. After the prayer meeting Mr. Cravens went home with the preacher, who complained of the dullness of the meeting. "No wonder," said Mr. Cravens, "you had such a dull meeting, since you crucified the Lord between two thieves."

XIII.

GENERAL BLACKBURN.

GENERAL BLACKBURN was a man of considerable distinction, aristocratic and wealthy. He was a lawyer of superior talents. He was an opposer of the Methodists; he had a particular dislike to any emotion or expression of feeling. One day he said to Mr. Cravens, speaking against shouting: "You see you Methodists are wrong; for *still water always*

runs deep." Mr. Cravens inquired: "General, did you ever see still waters run at all? And who are the inhabitants of still water? Snakes, toads, turtles, tadpoles, etc. This is their birthplace, their home. Still water is very impure, stagnant, unlike the sparkling spring, or the clear-running brook."

The General was a large man, thought much of his dignity, and prided himself upon his strength and muscle. One day he met Mr. Cravens at Court, and there was some misunderstanding between them about some books. The General got much displeased with Mr. Cravens, and raising his hand, as if about to strike, told him "he ought to have his face slapped." Mr. Cravens assumed a bold attitude of defiance as he looked upon him with his one eye, and said: "General Blackburn, you can slap my

face as soon as you please; but let me tell you *my religion teaches me to love all mankind, and to fear none.*" The General acted on the principle that "discretion is the better part of valor," and let the old hero alone.

XIV.

THE LOCAL PREACHER.

THERE was a local preacher from the south side of the Blue Ridge Mountain in Virginia, who had moved over into Mr. Cravens's neighborhood, and brought with him a slave man and his wife, whom he owned. A short time after he sold the woman for three hundred dollars. Soon after he was invited to preach in the house of worship where Mr. Cravens attended, when he was not abroad preaching. The local preacher

delivered his message, and, according to the custom of the times, a class meeting was held immediately after the sermon. The class-leader desired the local preacher to meet the class, and he consented to do so. He began with Mr. Cravens, inquiring: "Well, brother, how is it with you?" "Very well," answered Cravens. "But have you the love of God shed abroad in your heart?" Mr. Cravens had heard of his selling the man's wife, and his soul was full of righteous indignation, and in a tone of thunder he said: "*You nigger thief*, do you stand before me with the three hundred dollars in your pocket you got for that man's wife you sold the other day and ask me about the love of God in my soul? Go and give the man back the money he paid you for the slave, and bring the woman back to her husband,

from whom you have separated her, before you ask me about the love of God in my soul." The man looked almost petrified. He looked as David did when Nathan said to him, "Thou art the man," and like Belshazzar when he read the handwriting on the wall. Then Mr. Cravens turned to the class-leader, whose name was Jacob, and said: "Jake, if you ever invite a nigger thief to meet this class again I will present a charge against you, have you brought before the society, and expelled."

XV.

THE OLD LANDLORD.

THERE lived near Mr. Cravens an old landlord by the name of M'Gronigle. He was a Roman Catholic, and yet he would go to Methodist meeting. At a

certain time Mr. Cravens was preaching in Staunton from, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." In his sermon he showed the various ways the Savior knocked at the door of sinners' hearts—his patience in standing and waiting, till his locks were wet with the dews of the night, and how sinners barred and bolted the door, and kept the Savior out, treating no other friend so ill; and yet," said he, "if sinners would go to a tavern and knock at the door at midnight for a glass of whisky, there is not a landlord, late as is the hour, but what would arise and let them in." Just as Mr. Cravens was uttering the last sentence the old landlord entered the house of worship. Mr. M'Gronigle, believing that Mr. Cravens meant him,

took it as a personal insult, and immediately left the house to return home. Some one inquired: "Why do you not remain till the service is over?" He answered: "Because I was never so insulted in my life as I was by Billy Cravens; for he told the whole congregation that I would get up at midnight and open the door to sell any man a glass of whisky." How true, "a guilty conscience needs no accuser!" Mr. Cravens never thought of the old landlord—it was an illustration.

XVI.

M'GRONIGLE AND THE QUARTERLY MEETING.

THERE was a quarterly meeting held in a grove near Mr. M'Gronigle's, and the old landlord attended. Jacob Gruber was the presiding elder, and preached

one of his characteristic sermons. Mr. Cravens was present. It was the custom in those days to have an exhortation after the sermon. The very moment Mr. Gruber finished his sermon the old landlord mounted his chestnut-colored horse and started for home. Some one inquired "why he left before the meeting closed." He said "he saw Bill Cravens there, and thought he was about rising to exhort, and he was afraid he would give him another shot, and he thought he would get beyond his reach, for he never was so abused by any other man as he was by him." He was afraid to hear him afterward. How true "the wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are as bold as a lion!"

Mr. M'Gronigle made a great deal of money. He lost his wife and children. He purchased a slave by the name of

George: he was converted and joined the Methodists. George married Patience, a slave of General Blackburn's, and she joined the Methodists. The old landlord died, leaving his home and property to George and Patience, who were great favorites with him. They kept a Methodist tavern, where many a weary itinerant was glad to find a resting-place, and where they received a hearty welcome.

XVII.

THE ROWDIES.

THE late Rev. William Butler, a venerable minister of the Baltimore Conference, related the following, which illustrates Cravens's courage and feats of strength:

There was a certain district in Vir-

ginia in which Mr. Cravens had made enemies of certain "lewd fellows of the baser sort," by the boldness with which he had preached against intemperance and slavery. They determined to mob him the next time he came to preach in their neighborhood. The respectable people of the region were opposed to mob violence, and had just respect for Mr. Cravens as an honest and faithful preacher of the Gospel. They determined to protect him, and so informed him when he came to the appointment. "Leave them to me," said Cravens, "leave them to me: there will be no need of fighting."

It was a woods meeting; and as Mr. Cravens approached the place he saw a number of sawed blocks lying on the edge of the woods, and the gang of rowdies sitting on and around them.

He dismounted, walked directly up to the spot, selected a large block, and spoke to the young men as follows: "This block will make me an excellent pulpit. Please carry it further into the woods." The bold frankness of his demeanor overawed them, and almost unconscious of what they were doing, they obeyed him at once. When the block was set down he mounted it. A large limb of a tree touched his head; he stretched his brawny arm upward, took hold of the limb, and with one jerk, demanding the strength of a giant, tore it from its socket and threw it far away. This display of physical strength, added to the moral power with which he had already impressed the would-be-rioters, settled the question. No defense of Mr. Cravens's person was needed. The young men mingled quietly with the

congregation, listened attentively to the sermon, and went away lambs.

XVIII.

THE HOST.

MR. CRAVENS entered upon a new field of labor. His first stopping-place was to be at the house of a large slaveholder, a man of great influence in his neighborhood, and a prominent member of the Church. Mr. Cravens rode up to the gate: a servant came to open it for him, with a welcome:

“Ride up to the house, sir; master is in.”

“Tell your master to come here,” was the reply.

The gentleman came, and, judging from Mr. Cravens’s appearance, dress, and saddle-bags, that he was the new

preacher, spoke to Mr. Cravens with great kindness and cordiality, telling him that his house was the preachers' home.

"But, before I make it my home," replied Cravens, "I must have a word with you."

"O come in, come in; we shall have plenty of time to talk."

"No, sir; what I have to say must be said before I enter your door."

"Say it, then."

"Well," said Mr. Cravens, "I wish to inform you that, in my opinion, slaveholding is robbery."

"Ah, indeed," said the gentleman, "that *does*, indeed, need explanation before you enter my door; for I am a slaveholder."

"Well," replied Cravens, "do you see that wood? Near it is your cornfield.

Suppose the field filled with ripe corn, and that a colony of monkeys dwell in a cave in the wood. They come out at night, and form a line from the mouth of the cave to the cornfield. One monkey picks the corn, throws it to the next, he to the next, and so on till it reaches the monkey at the mouth of the cave, who throws it into the repository. Now, tell me, which is the biggest thief, the one who picks the corn, or those who enjoy it in the cave? It is just so with your slaves: they or their ancestors were stolen in Africa, and have been handed down from father to son until they have reached your hands."

The gentleman laughed heartily. "A fine illustration, Mr. Cravens. Come in, come in, and we will discuss it around the fireside." He remained ever after one of Mr. Cravens's warmest friends.

XIX.

JOSEPH FRYE.

MR. FRYE was one of the noble men of the Baltimore Conference, who battled nobly for the truth. He was well acquainted with Mr. Cravens and his mortal enmity to slavery. He held, many years ago, a camp meeting in Virginia. Mr. Cravens came to the meeting, and Mr. Frye said to him, that as they were in Virginia, surrounded by slaveholders, they could do them but little good by denouncing slavery; it would prejudice them against the Word, and close the door for doing them any good; and, therefore, requested Mr. Cravens not to preach against it, or denounce it during the meeting. Mr. Cravens complied with his request, as he was the presiding

officer, and on that subject he was still as death. The last day came, and they gathered at the stand for their farewell meeting. Mr. Frye invited Mr. Cravens to say a few words before they separated. Mr. Cravens arose, and looking at Mr. Frye and then at the preachers on the stand, said: "I have been here a week doing journey-work; now I give notice that I am going to set up business for myself." He did set up for himself. He attacked the peculiar institution; he denounced it as unjust, cruel, wicked. He showed its guilt and enormity; he anathematized them; he rolled over their heads the thunders of God's violated law, and flashed the lightnings of Sinai around them till they trembled, and some gnashed upon him with their teeth.

XX.

FRYE AND THE DUTCH FAMILY.

JOSEPH FRYE will always have a conspicuous place in Methodist annals. Mr. Frye went out into the Green River district; the country was new, and the houses far between. Night overtook him, and he came to a house, and said "he was a preacher, and a stranger, and, as it was far to another house, he would esteem it a great favor if they would permit him to stay one night." They were Dutch: the family talked in their own language how they had been imposed upon by strangers; that it was not safe; that he was probably an impostor, and no preacher; and they concluded they could not keep him, and the stranger must go on. Mr. Frye was also a Ger-

man, and understood every word they said, and made an appeal in their own language that was irresistible. Then they invited him to come in, and made him welcome. After supper he—as was the custom among the early fathers—talked to the family on religion. He inquired of the man of the house “if he had religion?” He said “Yes.” “Has your wife religion?” “Yes,” he said, “he and his wife had had religion ten years.” He said their Lutheran minister gave it to them. Mr. Frye inquired: “Have the children got religion?” He answered “Yes; they all have religion but Hans.” “But why has not Hans got religion?” With an oath he answered: “Because the big fool did not know enough to get his Catechism.”

XXI.

THE SPIRITUAL BUILDING.

THE late Dr. Thomas E. Bond related to me the following characteristic anecdote :

In 1800 Dr. Bond heard Mr. Cravens preach in Baltimore on the spiritual building. After having noticed the foundation, he dwelt upon the superstructure. He showed the materials of which it was composed, and represented the Master-builder erecting the edifice, laying one stone upon another. He said, among others, he beheld a stone of rare beauty, that he admired exceedingly; and said this stone must have a conspicuous place in the front part of the building, for it will greatly add to its beauty. He placed it upon the wall, adding, "That

is a most beautiful stone." But, to his surprise, it would not fit the living stones—it would not lie down, and a corner of it stuck out, making it look very awkward. He took his hammer and knocked off a corner of it to make it smooth, so it would lie down; but it still stuck out, and it would not lie down. He tried it again, with no better success. He took his hammer and struck the stone a heavy blow, in order to make it lie, when, to his surprise, the stone broke, and out jumped a negro and a whisky bottle. The idea was this: they could not build with improper materials; they will not fit—they must not build with whisky and slavery.

XXII.

THE ENRAGED MAN.

HE had preached at a camp meeting in Virginia against slavery and whisky. He had harpooned them both. He had denounced them in every possible form, showing their terrible guilt and enormity, and holding them up to scorn and derision. He made them look as ugly as sin, black as perdition. The guilty ones quailed in his presence, and he thundered the anathemas of heaven into their ears. When he had finished his discourse a strong man approached him and said: "Mr. Cravens, I am going to lick you; we will stand no such preaching as that." Mr. Cravens looked at him, and his one eye was enough to pierce through him, and with a countenance, on every feature

of which boldness was written, said to him, "I do n't think the Lord would let you, and if he would, I would n't." It was like a thunder-clap in a clear sky, like an earthquake shock ; and the man concluded wisely to let Mr. Cravens alone ; and suddenly he was among the missing.

XXIII.

THE DUTCH FAMILY.

MR. CRAVENS often went from impressions. At one time he was impressed he ought to go to Tygart's Valley, believing the Lord had a work for him to do there. This was a valley west of the Alleghany Mountains, that took its name from an early settler by the name of David Tygart. There is also a river called Tygart's River. The

region abounded with wild beasts and Indians.

Bishop Asbury visited this valley as early as July, 1788, with Valentine Cook and Dr. William Phœbus, and thus describes it: "We had to cross the Alleghany Mountains again at a bad passage. Our course lay over mountains and through valleys; and the mire and mud was such as might scarcely be expected in December. We came to an old forsaken habitation in Tygart's Valley. Here our horses grazed about, while we boiled our meat. Midnight brought us up at Jones's, after riding forty, or perhaps fifty miles. The old man, our host, was kind enough to awake us at four in the morning. We journeyed on through devious, lonely wilds, where no food might be found, except what grew in the woods, or we carried with

us. We met with two women who were going to see their friends, and to attend the quarterly meeting at Clarksburg. Near midnight we stopped at A.'s, who hissed his dogs at us ; but the women were determined to get to quarterly meeting ; so we went in. Our supper was tea. Brothers Phœbus and Cook took to the woods. Old —— gave up his bed to the women. I lay along the floor, on a few deer-skins, with the fleas. That night our poor horses had no corn ; and the next morning they had to swim across the Monongahela." *

It was this valley Cravens felt an impulse to visit. He unharnessed his horses and left his plow in the furrow ; he went into the house and requested his wife to prepare his clothes, for he must go to Tygart's Valley. He soon bid

* Asbury's Journal, vol. II, page 36.

adieu to his wife, and started on his journey. Having crossed the mountains, he began to reflect that he knew no one in all that region; but, believing God had sent him on that mission, he trusted to the Divine guidance.

After many a weary day's journey he found himself in the famous valley. While journeying on he saw a small log-cabin, and he dismounted from his horse and knocked, and was invited to walk in. The woman of the house was preparing for dinner—she was making soup—and while preparing some vegetables, she cut her thumb, and it bled profusely, and it ran into the soup. Mr. Cravens said to her: "I am a preacher, and have come to preach the Gospel to the people in this valley, if they will hear me." She replied: "Vell, vell, I did hear one man breach ven I was a

leettle gal in Pennsylvania, and I often dought I vould like to hear von oder man breach." Mr. Cravens said: "I should like to preach in your house if you will allow me." The woman said: "Vell, vell; ven daddy and the poys come home to dinner, ve vill see." The dinner horn was blown, and daddy and the boys came in, and the stranger was invited to dine. Cravens said "the thumb soup was rather tough; he had a difficulty in getting it down, though he was very hungry." While at the table the woman said: "Vell, daddy, tish bees von breacher. I did hear von man breach when I was a leettle gal, and I often dought I would like to hear von oder man breach, and tish man says he vill breach in tish house if ve vill let him."

Consent was given, and the boys were

to tell the neighbors, and they were to inform others. The people lived very wide and scattered. When night came the log-cabin would not contain the people, who came for miles, so great was the novelty—no sermon ever having been preached in that region. Mr. Cravens preached from, “Ye must be born again”—dwelling upon the nature and necessity of the new birth. The audience were very attentive, but none more so than the woman of the house, who smoked her pipe incessantly during the service. After the people had dispersed the man and woman seated in the chimney-corner smoked their pipes. The woman began to talk to herself thus: “Vell, vell ; I dinks I shall not ; I dinks I shall not.” Mr. Cravens inquired: “Mammy, what is that you will not do?” “Vell, I’s e had a very hard time

in tish world, and I have seen a great deal of trouble. For seven long years I carried te corn on mine pack to te mill over dat mountain, and when it was ground I brought it home on my pack. I tinks I shall not—if the rest of dem wish to be born again I have no objections ; but I must be excused. As for me, I have been borns a plenty.” But, notwithstanding her ignorance and her objections, she and her husband and children were all born again ; and on that man’s land was erected the first Methodist church in Virginia west of the Alleghany Mountains.

XXIV.

THE DISTILLER.

CRAVENS was a great enemy to whisky—to drinking it or retailing, whole-

saling, or to distilling it. Never was he more at home than when denouncing its use or its traffic. Whisky drinkers and manufacturèrs would writhe under his denunciations, get mad and gnash upon him with their teeth, and would have whipped him if they thought they were able. At a certain time in Virginia he was showing the guilt of the distiller, who manufactured the article and supplied others. He said they were poisoners-general—they were wholesale murderers. Their money was stained with blood, and blistered with tears. He dwelt upon wives' woes and orphans' sorrows—upon untimely deaths, disgraceful graves, and murdered souls, and inquired, "Who slew all these?" He showed this was the certain and legitimate result of the traffic—the mother of all these abominations—that the dis-

tillery was the fountain that supplied them all, and sent forth its streams of fire to desolate the land. His description of the still was equal to that of Deacon Giles's distillery—it was graphic, horribly exact, true to life. He called the distillery their "*copper-headed god*." He described the devout adoration of its worshipers—their humility—sometimes on their knees and then flat on the ground, worshiping their idol, and then the length of time they would continue at their devotions—so drunk they could not arise. It was irony equal to that of Elijah. Can we wonder they were offended? It interfered with their interest and appetite. It was like the opposition Paul met with in Ephesus from those who made "silver shrines," who said: "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth;" and they were "full

of wrath, and cried out, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' " So Cravens was interfering with the craft by which the whisky dealers obtained their wealth. No wonder he met with powerful opposition. It was said "he was not preaching the Gospel—they liked to hear the Gospel—he was minding other people's business—interfering with the rights of others, and ought to be driven out of the country." But Cravens cared for none of these things. He denounced in the boldest manner the anathemas of Heaven against them—he rolled Mount Sinai's thunders over their guilty heads, and flashed its lightnings around them until they quailed, and some of them abandoned their cruel and ruinous business. This was the case with Judge Allen. He heard Mr. Cravens in Virginia on the *sins of the still*. The Judge was a very

extensive distiller, and was highly offended at the remarks of Mr. Cravens—considered him personal and impudent. However, he listened attentively to his arguments, and his graphic description of the terrible effects that followed the distilling of whisky, and his conscience was troubled, and his judgment convinced; and he began to say: “He reasons well, his premises are sound, and his conclusions just, and there is no breaking the links of the chains of his logic. Why should I get displeased? Why find fault with Mr. Cravens? He is right, and I am wrong—*I will distill no more.*” From that day his distillery was closed, and its fires forever extinguished. The Judge would not rent his building to others lest they should distill.

Through Cravens’s searching appeals the Judge was converted to God, and

united with the Methodist Church, and the old distillery was transformed into a house of worship, and there they preached the Gospel. The old still was dedicated to high heaven; and where it had echoed with the merry laugh, amidst hilarity and glee, it rung with shouts of joy and songs of triumph from redeemed souls. The Judge often shouted aloud the praises of his Redeemer, and said "he believed it right to shout—though opposed to it most of his days—it was the first thing he did when God converted his soul." The Judge maintained his integrity until his final hour.

William Cravens never hewed blocks with a razor, nor tried to cut down a hickory tree with a pewter ax. He used the sharpest arrows he could find in the quiver of heaven. This story illustrates

his honesty, his fidelity, and justifies the title by which we call him, "Valiant for the Truth."

XXV.

THE BLACKSMITH.

THERE was a certain blacksmith in Virginia, who was a great enemy of the Methodists, and especially Methodist preachers. It was his practice to whip every one that came on to the circuit. Several were whipped severely by the belligerent blacksmith. Mr. Cravens heard of him, and had an appointment on the circuit, and was under the necessity of passing the dreaded blacksmith's shop. As he approached it the smith knew him by his dress, and coming out from the shop seized the reins of Mr. Cravens's horse and inquired "if he was

a Methodist minister?" He answered "Yes." The blacksmith, who had a brawny arm, told him he "whipped every Methodist minister that passed his shop, and he must prepare for a licking." "Come on," said Mr. Cravens, "if I must take it." The blacksmith made several passes at Cravens, which he parried off. He then dismounted from his horse, seized the blacksmith, who was an infant in his arms, threw him upon his back, placed his knees on his stomach, and sung one of his favorite hymns. Holding him down with his great weight, the man was very uncomfortable, and cried out, "Lord have mercy on me." "Amen," said Cravens; "that is a good prayer; say it again." He then made him repeat the Lord's prayer after him, and would not let him up till he had promised never to inter-

fere with another Methodist preacher. It is said, from that circumstance, the blacksmith was awakened and converted, and became a very useful member of the Church.

XXVI.

THE APOLOGY.

MR. CRAVENS preached in Staunton, Virginia, against slavery. It gave great offense, and the excitement was tremendous. They threatened to prosecute him for trying to produce an insurrection among the slaves. Mr. Cravens was acquainted with the real state of things, and gave notice that on such a day he would preach an apology. The day appointed came, and crowds were there to listen to it. They expected he would recant, and thus avoid prose-

cution, and put down the excitement, and remove the prejudice against him. Judge of their astonishment when he said he had promised to preach an apology; but an apology was not a *recantation*, but an explanation, a defense, a justification, like Watson's Apology for the Bible. His text surprised them more. It was a sermon in itself, and as sharp as a two-edged sword. It is found in Micah iii, 10, 11: "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us." The sermon accorded with the text—it was terrific. He used the sharpest arrows as he bent his bow, and took

direct aim at the hearts of the King's enemies.

I. *He showed how Zion was built with blood, and Ferusalem with iniquity.*

1. It was built with the blood of slaves.

2. It was built with the blood of children.

3. It was built with the blood of the innocent.

They built by riches gotten by violence and by the condemnation of the innocent. They educated their children to believe there was no harm in the bloody institution. "But when God maketh inquisition for blood he will remember them." He compared them with the pelican in the wilderness, who having eaten all he can, puts the remainder into his pouch for his young ones. And this is what you slaveholders

do—you get all you can out of your slaves, use it, and then leave it for your children. Thus Zion was built with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

II. *He noticed the guilty leaders.*

1. The priests, who taught for hire—men who cared more about the fleece than the flock—hireling priests, greedy of filthy lucre—mercenary ministers, who made a gain of godliness. His remarks were terribly scathing. The minister of the place—known as a hireling, one who shaved notes—heard him, and Mr. Cravens shaved him with a sharp razor.

2. The heads, who judge for reward. He noticed those judges who were corrupt, who would give decisions contrary to law and evidence, because they had been bribed, and received rewards for their unrighteous judgment.

3. The false prophets, who divine

for money. He showed that even the Church of God was built with blood—the guilt of holding their fellow-men in bondage, separating husbands and wives, parents and children, selling the image of God. Then the guilt of hireling priests, who could apologize for and defend such iniquity, and thus be the partaker of the sins of others; and the guilt of the ungodly judges, who cared nothing about justice, only the reward.

From Mr. Cravens they never wanted another apology—the remedy was worse than the disease—the apology than the insult. No harm followed this unyielding champion for the truth—this uncompromising enemy of the bloody system—for such bold and fearless denunciations of sin. It was worthy of Luther in his palmyest days, or of John Knox.

The blood of the chivalry was up to

fighting heat, and murmurs and threats of vengeance ran through the house—so much so that his friends felt for his personal safety. After the sermon he went out from the church, where exasperated men were ready to gnash upon him with their teeth, as they did upon Stephen—consulting what mode of punishment to inflict upon him. He said: “I understand that some persons here threaten to horse-whip me!” He seized a sapling and gave the tree a shake, as if an elephant had hold of it with his trunk, and said, with his lion-like voice, “*The Almighty never gave me such strength to be horse-whipped by a slaveholder.*” His look, his bold attitude, his gesture, his flashing eye, and the tone of his voice, showed him the great hero, the fearless man, and the cowards sneaked away, and left him conqueror.

XXVII.

THE DYING SLAVEHOLDER.

WHILE Mr. Cravens resided in Virginia he had a neighbor who was an infidel, and who owned many slaves. Mr. Cravens had tried to convince him of the truth of Christianity, and that it was wrong to hold his fellow-beings in bondage. The infidel was very sick, and near the world of spirits. His infidelity, could not stand the test of the dying hour, and he became deeply concerned about the salvation of his soul. He sent his servant with a request that Mr. Cravens would call and see him. He did so, and found him dangerously ill, and deeply distressed on account of his sins. The sick man said to Mr. Cravens: "I am glad to see you. I want you to pray

for me, and tell me what I must do to be saved." Mr. Cravens replied: "Mr. T., I thought it would come to this. What have you done with your negroes?" He answered: "I have provided for them in my will; I have divided them among my children, as I wish them to remain in the family." Mr. Cravens said: "I can not pray for you; God will never have mercy upon you till you are willing to do justly. You will never get religion till you set your negroes free."

Mr. Cravens returned home. In a short time another messenger was sent for him: "Master wants to see you immediately," was the request.

The sick man felt it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. His condition was a sad one. He was dying, and the minister had refused to pray for him. He then called for his

will, and, with a trembling hand, he altered it.

Soon after Mr. Cravens arrived, and, calling his neighbor by name, inquired: "Well, how is it now?" The dying man said: "Sir, I want you to pray for me, and tell me how I can be saved." "What have you done with your slaves?" inquired Mr. Cravens. "I have altered my will," said he, "and have provided for their emancipation." Mr. Cravens said: "I will pray for you now; and, more than that, God will have mercy on you, too."

He then kneeled down and wrestled with the angel of the covenant on behalf of the penitent man—pleading the long-suffering of God—not willing that any should perish—his ability to save to the uttermost. With pale face, wet with penitential tears, with quivering lip,

the dying man implored pardon. Their united petitions were answered, and he obtained mercy when near the narrow line that separates probation from retribution, and then died in peace.

XXVIII.

THE STUDENTS.

IN Lexington, Rockbridge county, Va., there were only two or three Methodists. Mr. Cravens had an appointment to preach there. It was in the days of persecution and opposition. The students of a certain institution, with others, combined to mob him, and declared he should not preach there—they would whip him. Mr. Cravens heard of it. At the appointed time he came. He took his stand and said: "I have been told you are going to mob me if I preach

here. What do you think God Almighty gave me these arms for—to permit my body to be beaten? No ; these are the keepers of my earthly house, and I shall defend it to the utmost.” The students were awe-struck at such boldness, and the mob paralyzed. He preached without interruption ; and when he had finished the service he went out through the crowd unmolested. As they were leaving the house, it being dark, he said : “Hold the light to my old blind side, so I can see my way out.”

XXIX.

THE DISTINGUISHED HEARER AND REV. MR.
MITCHELL.

THE Rev. Mr. Shanks, a son-in-law of Rev. William Cravens, and a member

of the Indiana Conference, related the following :

Early in the year 1819, Bishop Roberts, on his way from Pennsylvania to the Conferences in the South, arrived on Sabbath morning, in Fincastle, the capital of Botetourt county, Virginia. He put up at a public house, as he had no acquaintance in the place. He was informed there was one meeting-house in the town, and that the Rev. William Cravens, a Methodist minister, was to preach there at 10 o'clock, and Rev. Robert Logan, a Presbyterian minister, at 11, the same day. At the sound of the bell, the Bishop went to church and took his seat among the hearers. Mr. Cravens preached a characteristic sermon, and Mr. Logan followed. The Rev. Edward Mitchell, a Methodist minister, who lived a few miles south-west

of the place, was called upon to close the meeting. When the congregation was dismissed, Mr. Roberts inquired of Mr. Mitchell how far he lived from the town, and in what direction? He then said to Mr. Mitchell, if he would wait until he could get his horse from the inn at which he had put up, he would go along with him. To this Mr. Mitchell readily consented. As they left the town, Mr. Mitchell, who was always fond of conversation, and always desirous of giving it a religious turn, commenced talking about the preaching they had heard. Mr. Cravens having insisted on the doctrine of restitution, he wished to know of the stranger what was his opinion concerning it. Mr. Roberts said he had not the least objection to the doctrine. Mr. Mitchell said it was one thing to consent to the

truth, and another thing to practice upon it.

When they arrived at Mr. Mitchell's residence, he said to the stranger: "There is the stable, and the hay and the corn, and my rule is that all who come to see me must wait upon themselves." The stranger made no objection to this, but put up his horse. Soon the dinner was ready, and Mr. Mitchell asked a blessing, and then resumed the conversation. He inquired of the stranger where he was from, and whither he was going? Then he asked his name; to which the Bishop replied, "My name is Roberts." "Any relation of Robert R. Roberts, one of our Bishops?" asked Mr. Mitchell. "My name," said he, "is Robert R. Roberts."* Mr. Mitchell involuntarily dropped his knife and fork,

* Life of Bishop Roberts, p. 273.

and gazed a moment, speechless, at his visitor; and all at once the thought struck him that his appearance, conversation, and general deportment, were those of a minister of the Gospel; and it was a matter of astonishment he had not thought of his being a clergyman before.

Mr. Mitchell, after his nerves were quieted, asked the Bishop why he had not made himself known to them when he first entered the town, and preached for them? He replied that it was his intention to have done so. He had traveled rapidly the day before in order to enjoy the holy day of rest among them; but on learning the arrangements that had been made, and also that Mr. Cravens, like himself, was a stranger, and had only stopped to spend the Sabbath day there, he thought it best to

attend the house of God as a humble hearer of the Word of life, and have the privilege of worshiping in the capacity of a private Christian.

This anecdote illustrates the characteristic of Cravens's preaching among strangers; and yet his theme was making restitution to those we have injured—also the modesty of Bishop Roberts; and how wonderfully Mr. Mitchell was sold.

Mr. Cravens and Bishop Roberts were not acquainted in Virginia; but, after he emigrated West, the Bishop knew him well, and greatly admired him.

XXX.

THE STRANGER.

MANY families moved from Maryland and Virginia, which were slave States,

to Ohio, Indiana, and other Western States, because they were free. This was the case with Philip Gatch, Frederick Bonner, White Brown, and others, who early emigrated to Ohio. For this, among other reasons, William Cravens removed to Indiana. He sold his farm, and purchased a home in his adopted State.

While moving to Indiana, through Kentucky, with his family and furniture, a stranger met him, when the following conversation took place :

Stranger, (addressing Mr. Cravens, inquired,) "Where are you removing to?"

Cravens. "To Indiana."

Stranger. "That is a fine country. I have just come from there, and have only one objection to it."

Cravens. "What is that, for I am anxious to know, as I purpose to make Indiana my future home?"

Stranger. "It is this: they will not let a man take his property there."

Cravens. "But I am going to take my property there."

Stranger. "I mean they will not let a man take his *slaves* there."

Cravens, (raising his hands and eyes to heaven, exclaimed, with emphasis,) "Glory to God, there is one place besides heaven where a slaveholder can not go to."

The stranger concluded to leave, and Cravens thankfully pursued his journey to a State where they called no man master, and no man a slave.

XXXL

THE EX-SLAVEHOLDERS.

MR. CRAVENS did not cease to "cry aloud and spare not" against the sin of

slavery after he moved to a free State. Many had sold their slaves and removed to a free State, and purchased homes for themselves and their children with the price of blood, who became full of zeal in the cause of antislavery. Mr. Cravens gave them no peace. He painted their portraits in the most hideous colors, and then held them up before them so they could see the deformity of their moral features; and they were horribly exact. He denounced such men in the most unmeasured terms, as hypocrites stained with blood—a thousand times worse than the slaveholder who still held on to his slaves and treated them kindly. Was he not a moral hero, valiant for the truth?

XXXII.

DRAM DRINKERS.

THE venerable Bishop Morris, who is a great lover of the old veterans that laid the foundation of American Methodism, that labored, and we enter into their labors—who is a history in himself—was personally acquainted with “Billy Cravens,” and regarded him as quite a character. He related to me the two following anecdotes :

Mr. Morris was traveling on a circuit in Ohio, and Mr. Cravens visited and preached at Chillicothe. He attracted very great attention, and produced great excitement. The people were astonished at his bold denunciations of sin. He cried aloud and spared not. He dwelt on his favorite theme, intemperance, and the mighty evils that cluster

around it. He did not spare the distiller, nor those who sold by wholesale, nor the retailer, nor the cider swiller, nor wine-bibber, nor the beer guzzler. He showed that moderate drinking led to immoderate—that every full-grown drunkard took his first lessons here—and he inquired, with his stentorian voice, “What difference is there between a regular dram drinker and a full-grown drunkard?” Said he, “*I ’ll tell you—there is just as much difference as there is between a pig and a hog.**”

This homely and uncouth illustration has been remembered for over forty years. Plain, rough, and quaint, is it not true to life? And who could fail to see the point, that, as sure as a pig would soon grow to be a hog, so certain would a regular dram drinker grow to be a drunkard.

XXXIII.

THE BELLIGERENT MAN.

BILLY CRAVENS had preached the Gospel in a certain place with such boldness, denouncing popular sins, showing their guilt, their enormity, their crimson and scarlet color ; and, having touched upon a man's besetting sin, he was greatly offended, and threatened to whip him, and said he "would stand no such preaching from him or any other man." He made an attack upon Mr. Cravens, to punish him by personal violence. But he had counted without his host. He might as well have attacked Samson in the days of his glory, before he lost the lock of his strength. Mr. Cravens believed "the keepers of the house" were not made in vain. He defended himself with his brawny arms, which Bishop Morris said

“were so developed they looked like mill posts,” and soon laid the man on his back, and, as the Quaker said, “held him uneasy ;” and he held both his arms, as if they were in a vise, and placing his great knee upon him, and weighing two hundred and seventy-five pounds, the man had any thing but a pleasant position ; and finding it difficult to breathe, he struggled like a hero to get away, but all in vain. He quailed, and begged and promised, if he would let him up he would never abuse a minister again. Mr. Cravens said : “I’ll not let you up till you pray.” “I do not know how,” said the man. “I’ll teach you how,” said Cravens. “Now, repeat after me.” “I will,” said the poor, trembling fellow, as Cravens’s knee still pressed him, and he still felt his heavy weight. “Now begin,” said Cravens. “‘Our Father who art in

heaven ;' repeat." "Our Father who art in heaven," said the poor conquered, humbled, and subdued man, with a tremulous voice. And thus he repeated every word in the Lord's prayer after him. At the conclusion Mr. Cravens said "*Amen.*" "Amen," responded the man ; and thus the solemn exercises closed. No man ever rejoiced more when a prayer was ended—none more glad to hear "*Amen.*"

Thus Mr. Cravens taught him several useful lessons ; and, among others, not to interfere with a Christian minister in the discharge of his legitimate duties.

XXXIV.

THE DRAM-DRINKING BROTHER.

ON a circuit Mr. Cravens traveled in the West a brother was reported as guilty of "unnecessarily drinking ardent

spirits." He was summoned before a committee, tried, and found guilty. But the committee were anxious to retain him in the Church, if possible ; and they wished to know of the accused brother if he would not quit his habit of dram-drinking. He could drink or let it alone, and seemed to think it an interference with his personal rights entirely to prohibit him. But rather than give up the Church he would promise that he would *try to quit*. This did not suit Mr. Cravens, and he said, "Brother, you *must* quit." This was said in a tone of authority. But it was too much for the brother to promise. On his pledge that he would try and quit the committee retained him. Mr. Cravens, displeased with their verdict, carried the case up to the quarterly meeting conference, when the brother was required either to give

up his drams or to give up the Church. He gave up the former; and was, no doubt, by the uncompromising integrity of his minister, saved from the most loathsome and disgraceful of all graves, that of a drunkard.*

XXXV.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE COLLECTION.

THE times were rude. Some of Mr. Cravens's modes of procedure in revival meetings would be much out of place now. But we must make allowance for the habits of a new country, and the roughness of frontier life.

For this and the two anecdotes that follow we are indebted to Rev. J. L. Thompson. He says:

"I wish to record some early recollec-

* Life and Times of Allen Wiley.

tions of Rev. Wm. Cravens, one of the pioneers of Methodism in Indiana. He was a man of a good-natured mind ; and, though not so well versed in literature or the refinements of this age as some, yet he was a powerful preacher." He became acquainted with him forty-nine years since. They met at a two days' meeting in Warwick county, Indiana. He was then exploring the new country in search of a location, intending to remove from Virginia to Indiana, as he thought he could benefit his manumitted slaves. The meeting was held in July, just before the August election. Mr. Cravens preached on the Sabbath, and took a collection for the support of the Gospel. Governor Boone and some of the aspirants for office were present. Mr. Cravens, who understood human nature very well, said that was a good time to take

a good collection ; the candidates were there, and they would give their dollars for our votes, and would go to Corydon, then the seat of government, and give their votes for a dram, sir. It was thought by the friends of his excellency, the Governor, that he would take offense. But not so : he said it was too true of *some* who went to Corydon to make laws ; they would give a vote for a dram. The collection was remarkably fine for the times, and no doubt increased by the quaintness of Mr. Cravens, who made the appeal.

XXXVI.

THE MOURNER'S BENCH.

THE same day the collection was made Mr. Cravens preached again at night, and awful power attended the

Word. Before he left the stand he invited mourners to be prayed for in the following order. Said he: "Place four benches in front of the stand." This was immediately done as he had commanded. "Now," said he, "I want all who are seeking justification to come and kneel at this front bench; and all who are seeking sanctification will come to this second bench; and all the backsliders will come to the third bench; and all the hypocrites to the fourth bench." Strange as it may appear, each bench was crowded with mourners. "Now," said Mr. Cravens, "I want you all to whet up your Jerusalem blades, that when I come down and give the word of command we may go to war, and successfully fight and drive the devil from this holy ground." He came down among the mourners, fell on one knee,

and cried, "*Fire—fire!*"—and such a display of Divine power was rarely ever witnessed. Many souls were converted from every bench—the fourth not excepted.

XXXVII.

THE MAN WHO HAD TWO WIVES.

IN the midst of the shocks of power and the pentecostal scenes at the mourner's bench, a local preacher came to Mr. Cravens and told him there was a man kneeling at the fourth bench who had two wives, and the woman he was then living with was at his side. "Show him to me," said Mr. Cravens. He then walked deliberately to the man and said: "Sir, I am told you have two wives." "Yes," said the man, "I have." "You have, eh! Are you willing to leave the woman you now live with and live with

your lawful wife?" "Why, I do n't see how I can; she is away in Georgia." "You do n't see how you can," said Cravens. "Well, what are you doing here?" The man said, "I want religion." Cravens said, "You can't have it on such terms; for, if we pray a thousand years for you, unless you put away the evil of your doings, the devil will get you at last." He assisted him to get up, and started him from the ground, and his woman followed him.

XXXVIII.

BISHOP ROBERTS.

BISHOP AMES informed me that Bishop Roberts related the following with excellent grace:

Mr. Cravens was a pioneer of Methodism in Indiana, and he was on a

circuit of new ground, including the spot where Indianapolis now stands. Bishop Roberts met him, and Mr. Cravens boasted of what excellent sheep he had found in the wilderness. At a Conference where Bishop Roberts presided the name of Mr. Cravens's circuit was called, and the inquiry was made to know what collection he had taken for the worn-out preachers. Mr. Cravens answered, "Nothing." "Nothing," said Bishop Roberts, "I thought you had found some fine sheep in the wilderness!" "O Bishop," said he, "they are nothing but lambs—shearing time has not yet come." How prophetic! The lambs are grown, the sheep are large, the shearing time has come, and the fleece is exceedingly valuable.

XXXIX.

SUGAR CREEK.

MR. CRAVENS belonged to the class of ministers not afraid to swim rivers, to climb mountains, or sleep in the woods—facing every enemy, fearing no danger. In 1821 he was sent to organize a circuit, to be called Indianapolis. A few Methodist families had settled at different points on White River, in the vicinity of Indianapolis; and the Conference sent Mr. Cravens to take care of the few sheep in the wilderness, and to plant the institutions of religion in the center of the young, but promising State. He was just the man for the enterprise. He was zealous, and fearless, and indefatigable—preferring death to the neglect of duty. On horseback and alone he threaded his way through

the wilderness, from the settlements on the Ohio to those on White River. The streams were swollen by the recent rains, and it was difficult to cross. In attempting to ford Sugar Creek, in the vicinity of the old State road, leading from Madison to Indianapolis, he was swept from his horse and carried down the stream. His horse reached the bank on the opposite side in safety; and a man who had settled in that vicinity at an early day, seeing the horse come out of the creek without its rider, hastened down to the bank to see what was the matter. He states that when he arrived at the bank he saw a large, middle-aged man, crawling out of the water upon the limbs of a tree that had fallen into the stream, and as he got on the trunk of the tree he heard him soliloquizing and saying to himself: "Well, bless God, I

would go to heaven if it were Sugar Creek all the way." Said the backwoodsman,* "I reckon you will get there; you seem to be in the right way." A man who could praise God in the midst of such trials would be likely to succeed in his mission, and save his own soul. No wonder the backwoodsman admired his heroism. He would have made a splendid martyr.

XL.

THE INVALID WOMAN.

To Rev. J. F. Wright I am indebted for the following marvelous story. We should think the days of miracles had returned. How true that "truth is stranger than fiction:"

Soon after Mr. Cravens was licensed

* Life and Times of Allen Wiley.

to preach in Virginia, near his home lived an invalid woman, who had not been able to walk a step for many years, but was confined to her bed. The woman felt the need of the consolations of religion, and for sometime had been anxiously inquiring, "What must I do to be saved?" For her special benefit Mr. Cravens preached at her house. There were a number of devout, praying people, gathered together. The sermon was full of life and power. It was a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Hearts melted, tears flowed freely, and shocks of Divine power were felt. The house was filled with the Divine presence. While he was preaching the sick woman was pardoned and regenerated, and could exclaim,

"The Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God."

She rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory as she looked up and

“Beheld without a cloud between,
The Godhead reconciled.”

Not only was her soul healed, but her body also. The Divine Physician made a perfect cure, and she rose from her bed in the enjoyment of health, restored to perfect soundness. We read, “The lame man shall leap as an hart, the tongue sing for joy; in the wilderness waters shall break out, and streams in the desert.”

Some time after she removed to the West, and so did Mr. Cravens. Many years after he was preaching at a camp meeting in Indiana, and, in order to illustrate his subject, he related the conversion and cure of this woman. He had not seen her for years, and yet he

said: "If I am not mistaken that woman is on this ground, and if she is I desire her to arise and inform the people whether I have made a true statement of her case or not?" To the astonishment of the people, a woman arose, and with a voice tremulous with emotion said: "I am here, and I know the statement you have made of my case is the truth."

THE END.

